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Introduction: The *Querelle des Femmes* or “Woman Question”

In the age before sexual or gender identity politics, heterosexual marriage dominated gender relations. By the end of the medieval era, a body of men's literary writing in the vernacular crystallized around complaints about marriage.¹ Marriage was problematic because it linked men to women, who were, in their depiction, deceitful and lustful; the sources of men's confusion and unhappiness.² In 1275, Jean de Meun spoke for the new consensus when he wrote 18,000 lines to complete the poem *Roman de la Rose*, begun by Guillaume de Lorris. Meun's section was a satire of romance; his character Lady Reason, for example, advises the male protagonist that “reason” and “love” are mutually exclusive, while “Friend” counsels that women are wicked.³ These additions disrupted the gender ideology of the first 4,000 lines, which Lorris had written in the late medieval style of “courtly love” poetry.⁴ The later verses of *Roman de la Rose* represented a shift away from love poems and toward a new cynicism about courtship. Roughly twenty years later, Mathieu of Boulogne's *Lamentations* criticized marriage along similar lines – women cheated, nagged, deceived, and were, in general, cruel.⁵ In 1355, Giovanni Boccaccio wrote *Il Corbaccio*, which sought to prove, based on the author's experience of romantic rejection, “how much men naturally surpass women in nobility.”⁶ By the 1400s, these misogynist classics had fueled a “literary explosion” by women authors seeking to defend their gender's reputation.⁷

Renaissance scholar Margaret King writes that from 1300 to 1700, women authors asserting women's nobility and rationality introduced a female “other voice” into European discourse.⁸ They did

so popularly, met with a wide readership among humanist men and women. The Italian-French author Christine de Pizan began the movement. Pizan, rare as a paid female author, penned a series of counter-arguments to *Roman de la Rose* in the early 1400s, which she sent to her male humanist friends. Her writing sparked debates over the misogyny of the poem that lasted for over 200 years.

In 1405, Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies* set the standard for early modern protofeminism by rejecting “the misogynist message” that women required male stewardship.⁹ In this multifaceted work, Pizan repurposed 75 cases from Boccaccio's *On Famous Women* (1375), his celebration of 106 exceptionally obedient and chaste women of history. She used her own selections to represent “the universality rather than the exceptionalism of female virtue.”¹⁰ Pizan argued that women have more delicate bodies than men, but freer minds.¹¹ The very image of a city of ladies indicated that women can live capably without men. Her fictional city was composed of three levels: the first level contained heroic women, the third contained heavenly women, and the second contained the silent majority of women who lived in service to their male family members. The second level challenged the idea that women could only attain virtue if they exhibited masculine qualities, as did the heroines of level one. Pizan's work conveyed a sense of sexuality as a burden borne by women – she imagined a utopian community in which even regular women no longer had to concern themselves with it.¹²

Following Pizan's example, male and female authors seeking to defend women and destabilize misogyny were responsible for “a significant fraction of the literary product of the early modern era.”¹³ Most importantly, Pizan's work sparked what became known as the *querelle des femmes*, or “Woman Question,” a series of philosophical debates about the nature of women that lasted for over three centuries. This “Question” was argued in at least 251 books (mostly by men) in Latin and vernacular languages and throughout Western Europe.¹⁴ Men and women wrote on both sides of the central question: whether women were at all capable of virtue. Defenders of women ranged in their tactics, which included directly rebutting the accusations against women, arguing for female education,

celebrating women's achievements, and, for the more radical, redefining women's social roles.

In this period, the number of female-authored works “crescendoeed.”¹⁵ Limited professional options for women continued, as the nunnery remained the only proper alternative to membership in one's father's or husband's household. However, starting in the fourteenth century, women who were not nuns or otherwise secluded from society expressed themselves in increasing numbers. A few wrote about the “Woman Question,” helped by a growing number of women patrons and by humanist culture's interest in the question.

As an alternative to medieval scholastic education, humanism emphasized critical thought and called for educating all citizens to take virtuous action on their own. King and Rabil, Jr. write that “by calling authors, texts, and ideas into question, [humanism] made possible the fundamental rereading of the whole intellectual tradition that was required in order to free women from cultural prejudice and social subordination.”¹⁶ Indeed, the “defense of women” genre flourished in the courts of northern Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; at least 50 Italian texts within the genre were printed from 1524 to 1632.¹⁷ Reviewing this literature, it is apparent that the subject of women's nature preoccupied the minds of many leading humanist writers. Since humanists sought wisdom through reinterpretations of classical and religious texts, Aristotle's statement that women are “defective males” hung fetidly in the air. Looking for alternative theories, Baldassare Castiglione devoted the third of four books of his popular collection of dialogues, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), entirely to the topic of women. In the third book's celebrated fictional dialogue, Gasparo Pallavicino and Giuliano de' Medici argue the points against and in favor of the female sex, respectively. In response to Gasparo's arguments that women are naturally inferior and thus inclined to vice, Giuliano counters that men and women are of the same essence and thus equal in nature.¹⁸

While sympathetic men defended women more openly, there were some themes that male humanists were unable or unwilling to address. Although many men were happy to argue women's

capacity for learning or rational thought, they did not confront their male misogynist counterparts nearly so directly on the so-called “problem of chastity” among women.¹⁹ Male humanists still believed, generally, that patriarchal controls on women's behavior were necessary. Across early modern Europe, chastity was regarded as “woman's quintessential virtue,” as opposed to virtues ascribed to men such as courage or rationality.²⁰ Even authors representing “the other voice” did not argue against the social requirement that women be chaste. However, they did take a crucial step forward, which was to de-prioritize chastity when speaking about female virtue. Women's supposed problem with lust was tied, in popular discourse, to her incapacity for rational thought. As Virginia Cox writes, “women's supposed irrationality and consequent incapacity to moderate their sensual appetites was the justification most frequently employed to legitimize the strict constraints imposed on their behavior.”²¹ In buttressing representations of female rationality, women authors both countered popular accusations of female lustfulness and staked out claims for greater social freedom.

In the century from 1550 to 1650, Italian women penned a noteworthy series of successful publications that set the tone for European protofeminism. They learned by studying the vernacular texts and humanist writing of the Quattrocento, including Christine de Pizan.²² Beginning in the 1540s, Venetian publishers supported a rise in women's writing in Italian.²³ Into this flurry of literary activity stepped the Venetian author Moderata Fonte, who, like Pizan, exposed men's domestic dominance over women as the product of social history, not of innate superiority. Unlike successful women poets, such as Louise Labé, who wrote that she would “die” without men's love,²⁴ Fonte's female characters express distrust of men's affection. Most women writers were writing about their own personal relationships with men, or about religion. Fonte wrote about men *en masse*, as the happenstance rulers of society whose power turns them abusive.

The central theme of Fonte's *The Worth of Women* (1600) is the baselessness of men's hostility toward women. The text recounts a dialogue among six women: three who support marriage and

defend men, and three who scorn both as oppressive. (It was rare for a work in the dialogue genre to exclude male speakers.) One speaker, the scholarly Corinna, argues early in the proceedings that men have misinterpreted the Biblical Creation story, and that both men and women were created as equals with dominion over nature. Having established, reminiscent of Pizan, that men are not the natural rulers of women, the women produce a list of historical examples in which women's extreme devotion to their husbands was answered with mental or physical abuse. The women argue that wives give “indispensable services to men” while gaining nothing in return, and criticize marriage as the harbinger of domestic slavery.²⁵ By highlighting abuse as a social problem, Fonte broke new ground, forging “a connection between misogynist cultural assumptions and concrete social abuses.”²⁶

Despite Fonte's characters' criticisms of marriage, they are not opposed to true love. True love, they agree, can improve men. However, true love does not come easily to either sex, being replaced by passion (for men) or duty (for women). When women truly do love men for reasons besides physical “weakness,” the speakers agree this is usually because of their own “overwhelming natural charity or goodness,” or in special cases due to the “astral influence” from the heavens, which apparently matches particular men and women together.²⁷ Thus, for these women, the default state of female love is more devoted and sincere than male love. Regardless of romance, the women concur with their friend Lucretia's statement that “we are only ever really happy when we are alone with other women; and the best thing that can happen to any woman is to be able to live alone, without the company of men.”²⁸ Pizan likely would have felt pride in this statement of female independence.

Like Pizan's biography of Charles V before her, and Lucrezia Marinella's epic poems after, Fonte too competed within an especially “masculine” literary form: chivalric romance. *The Floridoro*, published in 1581, was only the second chivalric romance by a woman, and Fonte delivered a truly feminist story. *The Floridoro* is the story of love that develops between the male and female knights Floridoro and Risamante. Risamante, whose ultimate quest is to regain her stolen kingdom (a comment

on female inheritance practices), saves and otherwise assists other women on her travels. She matches Floridoro's prowess in combat, while Floridoro himself has particularly feminine qualities, including devotion. As a “good lover” seeking to marry Risamante, Floridoro is contrasted with rapists and other predatory men whom the female characters encounter.²⁹

Fonte died in 1592, before *The Worth of Women* saw the light of day. However, the importance of *The Floridoro* and of Fonte's literary courage for other women writers cannot be understated. Cox believes that *The Floridoro* influenced Fonte's younger contemporary Lucrezia Marinella, whose *The Nobility and Excellence of Women* emerged in 1600, the same year as *The Worth of Women*.³⁰ The simultaneous publication of the two works indicates a high point for “the other voice.” However, Marinella received much more attention across Western Europe, perhaps because of her choice of polemic as her genre. From Marinella's perspective, to assert women's nobility and excellence necessarily entailed a defense of marriage, since men had so criticized the institution for joining the two sexes. While exhibiting Pizan and Fonte's trust in female independence, Marinella's treatise fell more comfortably than Fonte's dialogue within the established canon of defenses of women.

The following section traces the prominent arguments of early modern protofeminism as encapsulated in Marinella's 1600 summary treatment. It introduces Marinella's unique sources of evidence, and emphasizes particularly her method of connecting personal and psychological relations between men and women to broader social problems. The review of Marinella's work sets the stage for the next section's extensive analysis of Isabella Andreini's sophisticated, sharp-edged, and under-appreciated pastoral, *La Mirtilla*. Both works utilize the symbolic arsenal of the time to assert that women provide moral and rational order in men's lives and to discredit complaints about marriage. They are the culmination of two centuries of protofeminism in which some women managed to share their experiences with a readership for the first time, and collectively grasped that their subjugation at home was a symptom of something larger.

Neoplatonic Ambivalence and Lucrezia Marinella

For many male humanists, women's outward beauty was an objective fact. They believed that physical beauty, linked as it was to spiritual beauty, served as the chief inspiration for men's love, a couple's eventual marriage, and men's achievements in life. Marsilio Ficino, a leading Neoplatonist, wrote that one's relationship with God was established through spiritual contemplation of another human being.³¹ Popular within the burgeoning academies, Neoplatonic conceptions of female beauty portrayed women as “intermediar[ies] with the divine” or “mother[s] projected on a cosmic scale.”³² Embracing the metaphor of woman as cosmic caretaker, characters in Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* argue that women's beauty, grace, and cleverness inspire men's ambitions.³³ In the 1500s, poetry, dialogues, and polemics obscured the virtues of women by debating the virtues they allegedly provoked in their potential suitors and husbands.

When women were considered in their own right, albeit rarely, allies and detractors of the female sex used women's beauty to argue for or against their moral fortitude. On the negative side, Giuseppe Passi argued that beauty was the root of evil in women, making them a scourge upon male society.³⁴ Slightly gentler, humanist writers such as Castiglione and Torquato Tasso believed that women's beauty caused men to love them. In return, the only job of a virtuous woman was to accept her suitor's marriage proposal. By this unidimensional assessment, without beauty, women lack value. These male humanists saw women as inferior in certain crucial qualities, such as reason and prudence, suiting them well for submission to a patriarch.

The exemplar of pro-marriage humanism, Marsilio Ficino's theory of Platonic love conceptualized love as a matter of the soul rather than of the body's base instincts. Platonic love resulted from the spiritual contemplation of another's goodness, in the same way that the pious contemplate God. According to Ficino, the human soul mediated between the Platonic realm of ideas

and the physical earth. Marriage represented the union of two souls and brought both parties nearer to the heavenly world of ideas.³⁵ Despite the even-handedness of this theory, few Neoplatonists of the sixteenth century, even Ficino, argued for sexual equality.³⁶

The reciprocity implicated in humanist ideals of marriage was under-theorized, and lived even less, by most male humanists. After all, true reciprocity would have threatened the foundations of patriarchal society. Although on paper both Castiglione and Ficino advocated a “reciprocal love of equals,” they believed in the natural inferiority of women and saw the marital relationship as one of “inequality and subordination” in which men provided needed guidance.³⁷ Even humanists who advocated women's education, such as Juan Luis Vives, supported literary studies that encouraged the three principal values men saw in women: chastity, silence, and obedience.³⁸ In Protestant countries, female literacy spiked in the 1500s so that girls could read Scripture in preparation for wifehood.³⁹

For reasons mostly related to the courtship process, many humanist men held that true virtue, a term associated with men (e.g. *virtù*, the cunning leadership quality of Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*), was rare among women. Giuseppe Passi echoed other male voices, including the poet Boccaccio, when he characterized women as ignoble in one of the most openly misogynistic texts in history, *The Defects of Women*. Published in 1599, *The Defects* argued that women were incapable of love and naturally unfaithful. According to scholar Leticia Panizza, it was “a repugnant diatribe, even by Renaissance standards.”⁴⁰ Passi's pet list of the vices of women “attacked women's alleged evil nature, perverse emotions, and especially their incapacity – 'proved' by countless authorities, arguments, and examples – to behave in civilized, social, and benevolent relationships with men.”⁴¹

Popular literature and high-minded poetry alike were consumed with men's complaints about women's supposed wiles. As Lucrezia Marinella astutely quoted in her 1600 counter-attack, Passi admits to writing *The Defects* for intensely emotional reasons: “I was led to this only by anger against those women who, caring little for their honor, have been the cause of innumerable ills.”⁴² Even

Petrarch, the greatest poet of the early Renaissance, focused his sentimental poems on unrequited love (albeit less violently). In popular literature, Pietro Aretino's *The Secret Life of Wives*, originally written in the 1530s, portrayed women as selfish manipulators. Near the end of Aretino's series of fictional dialogues between a woman and her daughter, the daughter summarizes what her mother has told her: "Blessed are the women who can satisfy their [own] desires!"⁴³

Even with a devoted mate, married men complained that their wives sapped their energy. Having experienced an unrewarding marriage, Passi advised his presumed audience of younger men "to shun women's wiles" for the good of their emotional health.⁴⁴ Texts like the educated Passi's were used to justify excluding women from male social or intellectual exchanges, subjugating them for the good of society, and still roundly despising that opportunity to subjugate (i.e., married life).⁴⁵ In response, Marinella's *The Nobility and Excellence of Women* reframed marriage as primarily benefiting men, precisely *because* of women's virtue.

Titled in full, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women, and the Defects and Vices of Men*, Marinella's polemic of 1600 both attacked Passi's misogyny and capitalized on Neoplatonism's spirituality to argue that women were nobler than men, even in masculine pursuits. Marinella added another sixteen chapters in 1601 and the book was reprinted again in 1621,⁴⁶ an indication of its success, perhaps among the growing number of female book owners in Italy.⁴⁷ It was "the only formal debating treatise of its kind written by a woman,"⁴⁸ attacking men for the same vices Passi had attributed to women, including lustfulness. Additionally, unlike Fonte's female cast in *The Worth of Women*, Marinella argued that women possessed traditionally "male" virtues such as rationality and prudence. She decisively rejected the "problem of chastity,"⁴⁹ the idea that women cannot control their sexual desires, as incommensurate with respected thinkers' high regard of women. The first section of *The Nobility* is a thorough account of the female virtues named by famous poets, philosophers, and other Christian and classical authorities, to counter Passi's enumeration (occasionally from shared

sources) of female vices. To Marinella, not only were anxieties over chastity fabricated, but they were irrelevant in the light of women's nobility and other virtues. The new fight eschewed the defensive approach in favor of an offensive position: it asserted women's moral and intellectual credibility as Pizan had begun, not as exceptions to the rule, but as universal traits of the female gender.

Following Neoplatonists, Marinella argued that women's beauty was the gateway to ideal love and the basis for men's own ability to comprehend higher truths. However, unlike most male Neoplatonists, she asserted the underlying claim of women's superiority. Citing tens of scholars and poets, Marinella concurred that women's beauty was an established fact. She argued that since, as many poets acknowledged, women are more beautiful than men, and the soul was seen as “the cause and origin of physical beauty,” men must agree that women derive from nobler Platonic ideas.⁵⁰ Further, women are men's path to these nobler states of being. She quotes Petrarch's *Il Canzoniere* (1374) as an authority: “From her comes the amorous thought that, while I follow it, sends me toward the supreme good, little valuing what other men desire.”⁵¹

Having established the nobility of women, Marinella painted misogyny as the true social problem – alternately by defending women and psychoanalyzing the behavior of misogynist men. As previously stated, male authors who allied themselves with women still shied away from direct criticisms of misogyny or of the chastity requirement. Men who had been rebuffed by women retained immense freedom to complain about women's sexual lives. Like Passi, Marinella criticized celebrated lyricists Boccaccio and Torquato Tasso for tracing their ideas about female nature to “reason,” when, she argued, they stemmed from emotion. She referred to Boccaccio's *Il Corbaccio*, for example, as a baseless product of envy, and wrote that a major reason men criticized women was disdain caused by the frustration of their sexual impulses.⁵² Thus, women, not men, must be freed from their partners' irrational lust. In shattering the foundation of “reason” misogynists relied upon, Marinella portrayed both private relationships and the public discourse as tyrannized by male desires, not female ones.

Early in *The Nobility*, Marinella performs a genealogy of the words used in Italian to mean “woman,” concluding that they indicate all of the work women do for men: “In the combination of all these names it can be seen that woman brings forth the ungrateful male, gives him life and soul, illuminates him with the splendor of divine light, confers earthly heat and light on him, renders him (contrary to the inclinations of his soul) affable and courteous, and finally rules over him with a sweet, nontyrannical dominion.” Since men could take advantage of these many benefits, and because Marinella shared the Neoplatonic belief in spiritual love, she defended marriage as a noble (and necessary) union, stating idealistically that “the whole world is bound by the sweet ties of matrimony.” To her defense of marriage, however, she adds that a woman in marriage is not a servant, but should be “the revered partner of her husband.”⁵³

Marinella's insistence that women are not men's servants contains another stipulation: “women are not obliged to love [men] back, except merely from courtesy.” Like Fonte, she interpreted men's desires as women's burdens. In 1598, Marinella published the vernacular love poem *Cupid in Love and Driven Mad*, in which wise, virtuous women defeat a lustful cupid. In this poem, women reject their supposed obligation to accept male lust, even from the godlike cupid. In *The Nobility*, Marinella clarifies this perspective. Men, not women, are “afflicted by a thousand passions,” forcing women to respond to these feelings in kind. Referring to men who beg for affection from women who show no interest, she writes, “nothing could be more foolish than to hold uncertain things as certain, false as true, and unknown as known and familiar.” Female virtue is indicated by “the great patience [women] show in bringing up, feeding, and teaching the impatient male.” In light of women's domestic subordination, Marinella specifically criticizes the virtue of men who try to coerce women into relationships “by saying that women are cruel, ungrateful, and wicked.” She defines an “ungrateful” person as someone who has received good things and given nothing in return, which, she adds, fits the description of a husband with a devoted wife. Women are never ungrateful, she argues, because men

give them nothing.⁵⁴

Torquato Tasso in particular represented the Neoplatonic ambivalence over marriage which Marinella sought to unravel. Tasso idealized marriage and love, yet his poetry vilified female characters who rebuffed any male characters' romantic advances. As opposed to Petrarch, who expressed peaceful, contented sadness in the wake of unrequited love, Tasso's verse demanded relief from this sorrow – in the form of women's affection.⁵⁵ Literary scholar C.P. Brand writes that Tasso's poetry, though also romantic, is decidedly more assertive than Petrarch's.⁵⁶ Like Boccaccio, Tasso regarded the heroines of the classical and Biblical past with praise, but addressed the female masses of his own time as a cause of male frustration. In his philosophical writings, Tasso praised only those historical women figures who met the standards of “epic heroism” that he had theorized for epic poetry.⁵⁷

Marinella's arguments for female superiority in all virtues, especially “prudence,” reflected the new understanding among female humanist writers that any disadvantages to women were socially imposed. Her most direct criticisms of male social advantage appear in the fourth chapter of *The Nobility*, “A Reply to the Flippant and Vain Reasoning Adopted by Men in Their Own Favor.”⁵⁸ In this chapter she addresses Tasso's writings on women. In his philosophy, Tasso had developed separate moral codes for men and women on the grounds that the latter were not capable of practical decision making.⁵⁹ He argued that “ladylike virtue” entailed only “obedient strength” toward one's husband,⁶⁰ and included only famous women in the category of “heroic virtue.” Marinella attacks this division of female virtue into two categories, arguing that all women exhibit prudence independent of men. She cites historical examples of prudent women and compares female prudence to male, arguing that “the highest prudence is not measured in terms of domination but in the use of mature intelligence in order to foresee and act.” Echoing Machiavelli, Marinella asserts that “prudence is the most noble virtue,”⁶¹ and therefore that women are the more noble sex.

Because he supplanted Petrarch's style, Tasso was the preeminent poet of sixteenth-century

Italy.⁶² Marinella took on a giant when she criticized his opinions of women in 1600, and again when her epic poem *L'Enrico overo Bizanzio Acquistato* in 1635 rivaled his own poems “not only in subject matter, meter (once again, the octave) and the high style of heroic verse but also in her poetics.”⁶³ *L'Enrico* was based on Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, but departed from it significantly by incorporating strong, self-reliant female characters.⁶⁴ Only five epics written by women have surfaced from between the years of 1560 and 1650.⁶⁵ Marinella was one of the few women to dare. The fact that she chose Tasso's work as a model and inserted female main characters indicates his influence and the potential reach of his attitudes toward women.

Tasso's work formed the centerpiece of another protofeminist statement of the period, for there was one other woman who meddled with Tasso's style and subject: the popular actress and writer Isabella Andreini. Today, Andreini's pastoral play *La Mirtilla*, published in 1588, is evidence of the wide reach and diverse forms of “the other voice” in the closing years of the sixteenth century. Tasso's “poetry of sentiment,” which overtook Petrarch's lyric, has long been regarded as the most significant contribution of his career.⁶⁶ It is this style which Andreini repurposed to create a feminist retelling of the pastoral plot. Both *La Mirtilla's* content and playful form suggest that Andreini's work and public persona may have turned audiences toward the same ideas about “relationship politics” which Marinella would take up more formally in 1600.

Though there is no indication that Marinella and Andreini interacted in life – women largely worked in isolation, and communities of female writers really only appeared in France⁶⁷ – the similarity in their themes reflects women's growing discomfort with the misogynist influences in their intimate lives. In focusing on interpersonal relations, Marinella challenged men's presumed right to rule over their wives and insisted on women's psychological independence, a quality which Andreini deliberately pursued for her female characters. The following analysis will explore the ways in which *La Mirtilla* portrays women's compassion and wisdom within romantic relationships, encourages audiences to

identify with her female characters, and may have pushed society further toward receptivity to Marinella's arguments. This outspoken, yet brief, chapter of the *querelle des femmes* at the turn of the seventeenth century suggests its importance as a crucible for the expression of a domestically focused protofeminism.

Male Desire, Female Compassion: *La Mirtilla* at the Heart of Late Renaissance Protofeminism

In 1588, Isabella Andreini was one of few public female intellectuals in Italy. She was a lead member in a renowned *commedia dell'arte* troupe, the Gelosi, which traveled the countryside performing for lay and elite crowds. Helped by her onstage feminine appeal and her successful marriage to a fellow actor, her own virtue was praised.⁶⁸ In 1601 she was inducted into the *Accademia degli Intenti* of Pavia, an honored academic society, for her philosophical writings and poetry. Scholars argue that many of Andreini's love poems, both before and after *La Mirtilla*, used the so-called “masculine” authorial voice of the Petrarchan tradition.⁶⁹ That she was able to write, meet, and perform in male-dominated intellectual circles indicates the level of public appreciation she elicited. As such, in the decade before Fonte and Marinella brought misogyny bubbling to the forefront of Renaissance discourse, Andreini was the ideal woman poet to launch a clandestine challenge to the status quo.

La Mirtilla was Andreini's only play in a career studded mostly with successes in Petrarchan-style poetry. It was based on *Aminta*, Torquato Tasso's most renowned pastoral. The text of *Aminta* was printed first in Venice in 1581, but became popular in France and England as well as across Italy. Paris saw a French translation in 1584 and London an English version in 1591. The play is regarded as one of the best works in the pastoral genre; it influenced the form and content of English pastorals throughout the seventeenth century.⁷⁰ Records indicate that Andreini played the male lead in *Aminta* at the age of 11.⁷¹ Such a cross-gender experience was not entirely uncommon for child actors of the period, but the role probably familiarized her with the gender ideology of her future source material. To

make matters more personal, the older Tasso once competed with the younger Andreini. She won second place to him in a poetry competition, and they may have had a casual friendship by the time she wrote *La Mirtilla*.⁷²

At the end of the sixteenth century, Tasso's romantic poetry offered a retrograde representation of women. Despite his apparent Neoplatonist convictions, Tasso's work directly attacked women, supplanting Petrarch's quiet sense of lovesickness. Andreini's *La Mirtilla* is noteworthy as a pastoral play, as a Neoplatonist account of romance, and most directly as a response to Tasso's sexism specifically. On the first point, it fell within the sixteenth-century tradition of Neoplatonist pastorals, which drew symbolic parallels and contrasts between the idyllic romance of traditional pastoral plots and real-life romance in an Italian court. However, as a protofeminist text, it made particular use of those parallels with courtly love, and additionally, of Neoplatonist views of women. Andreini dared to represent female characters not only as prudent, but as responsible stewards of their male suitors, in a time when thinking women comprised a valuable countercultural symbol. It was a literary act of rebellion in an age dominated by Tasso, who thought "female prudence" an oxymoron.⁷³

At first glance, the plots of *Aminta* and *La Mirtilla* seem somewhat similar. They both begin with a man interested in a woman who does not love him, the man threatens suicide, and the man wins the woman he desired. Upon closer inspection, however, Andreini has created characterizations and personal plot lines that depart with *Aminta* to parody female beauty stereotypes and to point out the fallacy of misogyny in light of women's cleverness, devotion, and aid to men. Together, Andreini and Marinella stood for opposition to women's domestic subordination.

In sharp contrast, Tasso's *Aminta*, from start to finish, is a lyrical lesson against female "cruelty." *Aminta* begins with an argument between two nymphs: Dafne is criticizing her friend Silvia for having no interest in love or reproduction, despite the shepherd boy Aminta's apparent love for her. As the play goes on, Dafne and the Chorus trade places lamenting Silvia's disinterest, as everyone

except Silvia believes she should love him back. By the end of the play, Silvia has been chastised for having a “heart of stone,” Aminta has attempted to kill himself over the rumor of Silvia's death, and Silvia is finally convinced by Aminta's near-suicide to marry him.

Complicating the story, Andreini expanded Tasso's outline to incorporate three female main characters. Compared to his “essentially static and degenerative types,” Andreini's characters control their own choices.⁷⁴ Her version excludes the Chorus and Dafne characters, failing to replace them with any other third-party commentary on female cruelty or romantic disinterest (though the men do their part). In *La Mirtilla*, the women speak to explain the reasoning behind their own decisions. Heralding Marinella's themes, *La Mirtilla* portrays romantic love as the nexus of women's obligations to men. Specifically, women will themselves into devotion to men so that the men do not commit suicide. In Andreini's version, the play begins with each of six characters (three male and three female) romantically interested in someone who does not share their love. By the end of the play, each of the men has convinced the specific woman whom he originally desired to marry him. However, unlike Silvia's true change of heart, Filli, Ardelia, and Mirtilla express their reasoning at every step: in order to protect the men from themselves, they will pretend at love.

Brand cites *Aminta* as evidence of Tasso's departure from the idealized love of Petrarch, since it argues that in the absence of love, it is best to force a woman's devotion.⁷⁵ Petrarch would likely have accepted the woman's first refusal and used unrequited love as grist for writing. From Tasso's perspective, “love” is entirely a male prerogative. He assumes that Silvia's timidity, not her genuine disinterest, is the problem, and that both man and woman will be happy once she overcomes it. *Aminta* ends with the pastoral genre's ultimate symbol of happiness – marriage – but only after the male lead has threatened to kill himself over his infatuation and thereby forced a partnership. By exalting love and marriage as the solution to men's malaise, Tasso expresses the Neoplatonist faith in marriage, while glossing over the reality that women can be forced to accept these emotion-laden proposals.

In *Aminta*, Silvia reverses her life's course and her ideological belief in chastity in order to give in to Aminta. In this play, women, not men, are socially expected to perform “compassion.” Andreini emphasized this unreciprocated burden by having her female characters narrate their courtship, including the work they do to maintain it. In *La Mirtilla*, male characters still level the conventional accusations of cruelty and ungratefulness against women, but the events of the plot suggest alternative interpretations. “Asides” spoken by women, along with conversations excluding male characters, reveal to the audience the superficiality of each romantic union – and also the women's subversive level of independent thought and action. Ultimately, Tirsi and Igilio, the two men smitten with the play's cleverest characters, the nymphs Mirtilla and Filli (respectively), convince the women to profess love for them by threatening suicide. However, the women's true feelings remain ambiguous.

The titles are a strong indication that Tasso and Andreini had different intentions. Tasso's play is named after the male main character pursuing the woman, as though Aminta has the most interesting or noble quest. Conversely, Andreini names her play after Mirtilla, the nymph who goes to the greatest lengths to save her male suitor, Tirsi (the only character name carried over from *Aminta*). Filli receives roughly the same stage time, but Andreini chooses Mirtilla as the namesake for reasons that can only be speculated – perhaps it is because her “rescue” of Tirsi is the most dramatic encounter in the play. Mirtilla saves Tirsi's life by following him into the woods, after he has resolved to kill himself, because she feels a sense of obligation to “save him from a cruel death and myself from infamy.”⁷⁶ The audience is made aware of the falsity of Mirtilla's love for Tirsi long before his suicide scene. She does not go into the woods to profess her love for him, but rather to make this necessary protestation only to save him. Anticlimactically, Mirtilla is tugged into a marriage by Tirsi's abiding infatuation. Her decision to “love” Tirsi is plotted on a level the audience has witnessed from the start, unlike Silvia's sudden and dramatic transformation into Aminta's loving companion.

Tirsi, the most misogynist character in *Aminta*, is the only character carried over to *La Mirtilla*.

Perhaps not coincidentally, he plays a central role in the contrasting gender ideologies of the plays. In *Aminta*, Tirsi provides a running critical commentary on women. Echoing so many male writers of the era, he calls women “ungrateful” for their unwillingness to return men's love: “Oh most extreme cruelty! Oh ungrateful heart! Oh ungrateful lady! Oh three and four times most ungrateful sex!!”⁷⁷ This would be laughable hyperbole, were it not that *Aminta* is clearly intended to tell of the transformation of an obstinate girl into a proper woman. In *La Mirtilla*, however, Tirsi is merely Mirtilla's pestering suitor. Mirtilla is the partner more experienced with love, whom he fails to impress. She gives in to his advances only because he threatens suicide. In the end, he needs her. Mirtilla's repeated rejection of Tirsi and the fact that she saves him anyway suggests that *La Mirtilla* may serve as a commentary on the backwards misogyny of men who so badly need women's help.

The tones of the endings of *Aminta* and *La Mirtilla* are strikingly different. In *Aminta*'s final scene, Silvia confesses her love for Aminta and learns not to be so “cruel,” “ungrateful,” or “pitiless.” The play ends with a final judgment on the female sex: an epilogue by the goddess Venus as she searches for her “lost” son, Amore (Love). In this monologue, the goddess says that women are only truly capable of pity, not love, even though the former may come disguised as the latter. Thus, to Tasso, love itself is a male virtue; the province of “courtly men”:

Nor yet do I hope to find him
among you, lovely ladies,
because, although around
your face and your long hair
he often jokes and flies,
and although he is often seated at
the doorway of pity
and asks you for shelter,
there is no one among you to give him
his desired refuge in her cruel heart
where only wounds and disdain are seated.
But indeed I hope to find him
among the courtly men
who do not disdain

to gather him in his abode;
and to you I turn, friendly group.⁷⁸

If Tasso's intended point is that women are incurably cruel, then in *La Mirtilla*, accusations of cruelty are repeated with almost comic frequency – not only against one character, but universally. In Act I alone, Uranio calls Ardelia cruel and ungrateful, and the same is repeated by Filli against Uranio, Igilio against Filli, and Mirtilla against Uranio. It is unclear whether Andreini conceived of this as a running joke, but the play's ending certainly paints each of these moments, in retrospect, as mere talk. All such accusations are nullified when the women devote their intimate lives to the men.

Since it occurs in both plays, one scene – the famous “rape scene” between satyr and nymph – is commonly used to compare *Aminta* and *La Mirtilla*. In *Aminta*, Tasso's Satyr poses a serious threat to Silvia. He traps her in the forest with the stated intention of raping her out of *romantic* – not simply sexual – frustration, complaining that his love for her goes unreturned. The scene suggests a kinship between his own plight and Aminta's. However, the Satyr's description of his premeditated rape is considerably more violent than anything said by a shepherd:

With my speed and power,
what struggle could a delicate girl put up against me
by running or using her hands?
Even tears and sighs--let her use every effort
of beauty, of pity, for, if I can,
I will envelop this hand in her curls,
and afterwards she will not part before I stain
my revenging arms in her blood.⁷⁹

Arriving just in time, Aminta catches the Satyr as he finishes tying Silvia to a tree. There has been no verbal exchange between the Satyr and Silvia. Aminta gallantly chases the Satyr away, but Silvia proves her female obstinacy by claiming allegiance to the chaste hunting goddess, Diana: “Do not touch me, shepherd, I am Diana's. I know how to loosen my feet by myself.”⁸⁰

In *La Mirtilla*, by contrast, there are no “delicate” girls to fall prey to the satyr. Andreini's Satiro refers to Filli as “delicate,”⁸¹ but her actions directly negate the description. In Andreini's version, Filli ties Satiro up, leaving him to be untied later through the chance assistance of a drunkard. Most importantly, in contrast to *Aminta*, in which the satyr goes quietly about his crime and Silvia (presumably) only struggles, Filli engages Satiro in a dialogue that cunningly distracts him.

The scene provides an opportunity for Andreini to parody hyper-masculinity. Satiro tries to impress Filli by claiming that satyrs are “as handsome as we are rough.”⁸² In response, Filli gushes that she is already “overthrown by your beautiful eyes.”⁸³ She convinces Satiro to let her tie him to a tree so that she will not be hurt by his immense strength when she kisses him. Her assurance that “the more tightly I tie you, the more safely I will then kiss you”⁸⁴ makes a mockery of Satiro's assertion that physical roughness is a positive trait. Satiro finally says, “I fear that you mock me and are making a fool of me,” to which Filli responds smartly:

O foolish one,
now you finally understand
that I have been mocking you! What woman,
even if deformed and vile, could take pleasure
in loving so monstrous and horrid a countenance?⁸⁵

In this sequence, Filli conveys two of Marinella's key points about gender, that women can prudently foresee paths of action and that their love is nobler than male lust. Events also associate male roughness and violence with physical ugliness, suggesting in Neoplatonic terms that men's souls are ignoble. There are other parallels with human men. For example, Satiro complains that Filli is “pitiless,” “ungrateful,” and “cruel,” which is particularly ironic in the context of his rape threat. He threatens to assault her “unless for my sufferings you give some recompense.”⁸⁶ The demand for compensation sounds similar to the other men in the play, although they speak of “love” rather than strict “recompense.” In *Aminta*, the heroic shepherd boy is contrasted with the satyr as the less violent

of two potential sexual partners. However, as literary scholar Malcolm Hayward notes, Aminta goes to the fountain with the “same plan in mind as the Satyr” – to achieve Silvia's conquest.⁸⁷ In eventually choosing Aminta, Silvia chooses the better of two coercive partners. Conversely, Andreini refrains from making any man a hero; rather, each woman “brings forth the ungrateful male” and “gives him life and soul” as in Marinella's description of marriage.⁸⁸

Historian Maggie Günsberg notes that a spoken aside can be used to privilege a character's perspective.⁸⁹ Filli's asides to the audience during her encounter with the satyr indicate that she controls the course of future events from the very beginning of the scene. Satiro brags to the audience, “Yes, I have her whipped!” Filli then whispers, “Oh, what an idiot!” He says, “She weeps aside, as best I can tell.” She explains secretively, “I want to appear afflicted.”⁹⁰ When she triumphs, the audience understands that Filli has been correct and in control the entire time.

By taking the male sexual request to its violent extreme, this scene in *La Mirtilla* also mocks one of Tasso's recurring complaints about women, that they have a “heart of stone.” In *Aminta*, Dafne sincerely expresses concern about Silvia's heart:

Oh Silvia, Silvia! You neither know nor think
how much the fires of love can do to a heart
if the heart is of flesh and not of stone
as that one of yours is.⁹¹

Upon hearing of the death of Aminta, Silvia is convinced Dafne was right: “Oh my! I am surely made of stone since this news does not kill me.”⁹² Unlike Tasso, Andreini dismisses the legitimacy of the “heart of stone” complaint by granting that line to the Satiro. Even while plotting Filli's rape, Satiro complains about her “heart of stone.”⁹³ Later in the scene, having tied him to a tree, Filli mocks the

stone imagery for the audience by making fun of his quasi-romantic intentions: “I believe you are such that she who sees you and then doesn't love you must be made of Caucasian stone!”⁹⁴

Filli does more quick thinking when she comes across her suitor Igilio in the forest, ready to kill himself over her. In contrast to *Aminta*, which contains full scenes in which Silvia repents of her cruelty, Filli simply decides to lie to Igilio that she already loves him. She cleverly locates him in the forest and waits for a cue: “I will listen to him and observe him attentively to see what he's going to do.”⁹⁵ Her assessment of the situation sounds entirely rational: “I would certainly be a block of stone if, having witnessed such solid proof from you, I didn't want to change my mind and my will!”⁹⁶ Similarly, when Ardelia finally assures Uranio she is “ready to change [her] will” and love him,⁹⁷ he responds as though indecision is a female trait: “You certainly show just now that you are a woman, since you have persuaded yourself all of a sudden to make me wholly yours!”⁹⁸ Unintentionally, Uranio has narrated Ardelia's inner conflict. He is correct that she has only changed her mind and not her heart. As Marinella would argue, “those who pity the sorrows of others are clever, wise, and modest.”⁹⁹ The cleverness of all three women acts as virtue when they convince the men of their love.

The contrast between women's willful devotion and men's passion is drawn so many times in the play that one wonders whether Andreini supports the eventual marriage of these asymmetrical couples. In *La Mirtilla*, Tirsi assures Uranio (who is hurt over Ardelia's rejection), “Free is our will, and one may desire freely that which he wants, in spite of Amore.”¹⁰⁰ This is an accurate assessment for the play's female characters; however, the men never get over their infatuations. As stated before, all three men marry the first subject of their interest, while all of the women have switched. Thus, the assertion of Tasso's Venus – that for women, love is pity – rings true, but not because the women do not feel true love; rather, their final choice of a mate is driven by concern for the male characters instead of their own happiness. Andreini does not dissociate this model from marital success. Tirsi's friend Coridone says of his own marriage, “so sweet and dear is this heaven-given companionship, and so sweet is

marital passion, that it sustains [men and women] together.”¹⁰¹

Alongside praise of marriage, Andreini reminds the audience that men control the course of action. Although Tirsi and Igilio describe love as a cruel trap set by the nymphs, Andreini implies that their suicide attempts are the real trap. In Act V, Scene I, Tirsi's male friend Coridone, trying to end Tirsi's infatuation with Mirtilla, pontificates that the birds caught in hunter's traps are like “rash lovers, who allow themselves to be enticed by the song and the sweetest words of the nymphs.”¹⁰² Tirsi misses Coridone's intention and instead describes himself as the hunter: “by virtue of my nets, my hooks, my traps, my snares, my dogs, my arrows, and this bow...I will never lack pleasures and sports!”¹⁰³ In this scene Andreini suggests that the men – who do, in fact, achieve their goals – are the ones setting emotional traps, and eventually Mirtilla, the play's namesake, falls victim to Tirsi's.

Although the men manipulate women's decisions to marry, marriage's value, in Andreini's depiction, resides in women. Coridone states that “whoever flees [his wife], also flees from the most worthy and noble part of himself.”¹⁰⁴ Further, the nobility of the women in *La Mirtilla* complicates simple Neoplatonist accounts of beauty-as-nobility. First, Andreini satirizes physical beauty as the basis for love. Ardelia, previously described as breathtakingly beautiful, actually falls in love with herself. Looking at her reflection, she cries, “Alas, I feel already in my enflamed soul a burning desire to possess the celestial beauty that I look at in vain!”¹⁰⁵ By taking “celestial beauty” to its egotistic extreme, Andreini mocks the Neoplatonists' superficial concept of beauty.

Unlike Ardelia, Filli is both beautiful and empathetic, apologizing to Igilio for her initial resistance to his love. Mirtilla's suitor, Tirsi, fails to comment on her beauty, instead advertising his own hunting talent. Mirtilla and Filli's behavior, especially as they plot together over their romantic lives, resists objectification, and Andreini provides no running commentary on their looks. Mirtilla and Filli are noble because they save Tirsi and Igilio, not because they are attractive. Moreover, when they compete early on in a singing contest to decide who may pursue Uranio's love, they tie – and decide to

always love each other, regardless of who marries Uranio.¹⁰⁶ In the end, Ardelia wins Uranio, even though she does not deeply desire him. The course of these events suggests that, without men, women maintain noble relations among themselves. The man most desired becomes almost superfluous to the story, and having desired Ardelia so much, appears to have overlooked the two noblest women.

The final moments of the play succinctly communicate the perceived differences between men and women. The six lovers, being now three new pairs, go to the shrine of Venus to thank her for their “loving” unions. All of the men pray to Venus for plenitude, while all of the women pray for peace. When Tirsi asks, “may [the land] be...always full of fruit,” Mirtilla adds, “may these shores never be disturbed.”¹⁰⁷ The sequence seems to intentionally contrast men's ongoing desire with women's hope for peace and stability, from which stems their compassion. Men's and women's hopes for the future diverge as the men assert their desire for ownership.

The play's ideological undertones peak in its final lines, delivered by Coridone, an outside observer on the three couples. As the pastoral requires, he is responsible for ending the play on a note that praises love. He prays, “may the nightingales in a contest...sing always of love's highest delights!”¹⁰⁸ Because the singing contest between Filli and Mirtilla has formed a memorable plot point, one can assume that the nightingales are a stand-in for the two nymphs. Coridone prays, therefore, that the two women who have most clearly shifted their desire from one man to another should stay as enthused about love as they are now. It may be the ultimate indication from Andreini that love is a matter of will, which the nightingales are responsible for “singing.”

Conclusion: The Legacy of Early Modern Protofeminism

In both *La Mirtilla* and *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, compassionate and prudent women exert rational control over men's ungovernable desires. Echoing Pizan and Fonte, Marinella and Andreini produced images of women and men at odds with popular representations. Both authors

reverse men's accusations of female irrationality and cruelty by portraying men as truly passion-filled and controlling. Their typical woman is long-suffering, intelligent, and knows not only how to serve her suitors, but how to save them. She chooses a wise path within limited options, but is not led there by deferring to men. Rather, she chooses on her own to aid men's mental and physical well-being.

As a result of increased literacy in Europe, Italian women in the Late Renaissance began to submit domestic subordination to public debate. Andreini rewrote a familiar play by a misogynist poet with clearly protofeminist intent. Marinella submitted a formal argument which laid bare the observations about men and women that had been subtly communicated in *La Mirtilla*. The Renaissance was a period of fits and starts for women writers. But they nonetheless managed at the very least to record women's growing consciousness of unjust subjugation. King allows that “something changed...in women's sense of themselves, even if very little changed or changed for the better in their social condition.”¹⁰⁹

In asserting the superiority of women, Marinella likely alienated male readers, but she crucially drew out the disconnect between Neoplatonists' belief in beauty as a symptom of nobility and their quiet acceptance that women were inferior. At the very least, she was the first to compile a complete review of the misogynist writings that had created the greatest obstacles for women. Her thorough polemic granted “the other voice” a compendium of talking points. In some ways, Andreini's play is a weaker support for women. However, its narrative perfectly evokes the key virtues that Marinella wanted her readers to attribute to women: prudence, compassion, and a moral sense of duty. Since no previous work appears to have submitted these virtues for consideration, *La Mirtilla* brought these aspects of women's value to men to a broad audience.

Both Marinella and Andreini made their case for female virtue based on women's fundamental differences from men, an approach as essentializing as misogyny itself. Early modern feminists' inability to act, or even to converse, collectively made impossible a theory of women's nature

independent of the male mirror image. The dual defense and offense that women adopted in order to combat Renaissance misogyny resulted partly in an image of women based on the perceived faults of men. Women realized that interpersonal relationships favored men's plans and desires, but their enforced separation from social life kept a competing program of female plans and desires at bay. In lieu of sharp social criticism, women critiqued the social disadvantage they felt within their personal experiences and relationships.

Precisely because they did not achieve great entry into the public sphere, women's writing in this time has increased significance for historians seeking to understand their experiences. The social symbolism at play in Andreini's work was just as important, for a population of newly educated female readers, as her participation in the male world of academia. For the thousands of typical women who were essentially forced into marriages with men selected by their fathers, Tasso's assertion that women resist love out of cruelty probably rang hollow. One can only imagine reading Andreini or Marinella in such a situation and feeling heartened – women everywhere are actually giving of themselves in profound ways, no matter the opinions of male relatives.

Marinella, Andreini, Fonte, and other protofeminist writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may not have fundamentally altered social relations, but they did establish that misogyny was a problem worth debating. By imparting a woman's vision of the world as Pizan did before them, they sustained the battle with misogyny among Western European intellectuals for two centuries beyond her lifetime. The many waves of early modern protofeminism from Italy to Germany, France, and Britain were not simply lost. Claims of women's inferiority did not soon recede, but Marinella left a lasting treatise that women could rely upon to feel self-worth and even solidarity. While there was no feminist community, no sense of political organizing, and only slight criticism of society, individual women increasingly recognized their status as socially constructed and socially disadvantaged. During the Renaissance, likely for the first time, women linked their own discontent to their social and intellectual

subjugation. The personal is and has always been political.

- 1 The University of Chicago Press published an influential series from 1996 to 2012 titled, "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe." The series' founders, Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr., aimed to republish and bring to light important works contributed by women writers to the growth of humanism during the European Renaissance. The "Other Voice" series contained 61 Renaissance-era texts in total, in a diversity of literary forms, including Fonte's *The Worth of Women* and Marinella's *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*. To open each volume, King and Rabil, Jr. wrote a detailed introduction titled "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series," which describes the trajectory of women's social status and writing since Biblical times. Additionally, in each volume, King and Rabil, Jr.'s introduction is followed by an introduction to the text. Virginia Cox and Letizia Panizza authored the introductions to *The Worth of Women* and *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, respectively. This paper draws extensively upon all three of these introductions. See Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr., "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Virginia Cox, "Moderata Fonte and 'The Worth of Women,'" in *The Worth of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Letizia Panizza, "Introduction to the Translation," in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- 2 Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr., "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), xiii.
- 3 Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lorris, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 74, lines 3035-3041.
- 4 King and Rabil, Jr., "Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women*, xiii.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Corbaccio or The Labyrinth of Love*, trans. and ed. Anthony K. Cassell (Binghamton, NY, rev. paper ed., 1993), 71.
- 7 King and Rabil, Jr., "Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women*, xvii.
- 8 Ibid., vii.
- 9 Ibid., xvii.
- 10 Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 223.
- 11 Ibid., 177.
- 12 Ibid., 219-223.
- 13 King and Rabil, Jr., "Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women*, xvii.
- 14 King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 187.
- 15 King and Rabil, Jr., "Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women*, xxi.
- 16 Ibid., xvi.
- 17 Virginia Cox, "Moderata Fonte and 'The Worth of Women,'" in *The Worth of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 13.
- 18 King and Rabil, Jr., "Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women*, xiv.
- 19 Ibid., xxii.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Cox, "Moderata Fonte and 'The Worth of Women,'" in *The Worth of Women*, 8.
- 22 King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 193-195.
- 23 Cox, "Moderata Fonte and 'The Worth of Women,'" in *The Worth of Women*, 2-3.
- 24 King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 216.
- 25 Ibid., 230.
- 26 Cox, "Moderata Fonte and 'The Worth of Women,'" in *The Worth of Women*, 14.
- 27 Moderata (Modesta Pozzo) Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, trans. and ed. Virginia Cox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 121.
- 28 Ibid., 47.
- 29 Moderata (Modesta Pozzo) Fonte, *Floridoro*, trans. Julia Kisacky, ed. Valeria Finucci (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 193.
- 30 Cox, "Moderata Fonte and 'The Worth of Women,'" in *The Worth of Women*, 12.
- 31 Jacqueline Murray, "Agnolo Firenzuola on Female Sexuality and Women's Equality," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 22:2 (1991), 206.
- 32 King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 238.
- 33 Ibid., 163.
- 34 Lucrezia Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, trans. and ed. Anne Dunhill (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 21.
- 35 Richard Hooker, "Renaissance Neo-Platonism," *The Hermetic Library* (N.p.: Washington State University, 1997), accessed April 24, 2012, <http://hermetic.com/texts/neoplatonism.html>, 4.
- 36 Murray, 212.
- 37 Murray, 207.

- 38 King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 13.
- 39 Ibid., 137.
- 40 Letizia Panizza, "Introduction to the Translation," in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), xlv.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 See Marinella's response in Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 82.
- 43 Pietro Aretino, *Ragionamento: The Secret Life of Wives*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Hesperus, 2006), 42.
- 44 See Panizza, "Introduction to the Translation," in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, xlv.
- 45 King and Rabil, Jr., "Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women*, xxi-xxiii.
- 46 Panizza, "Introduction to the Translation," in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, xxxi.
- 47 King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 174.
- 48 Panizza, "Introduction to the Translation," in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, xxxi.
- 49 King and Rabil, Jr., "Introduction to the Series," in *The Worth of Women*, xxii.
- 50 Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 14.
- 51 See the full reference to Petrarch in Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 20.
- 52 Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 76, 101.
- 53 Ibid., 7, 90, 93.
- 54 Ibid., 18, 98, 111, 99, 19, 112.
- 55 C.P. Brand, "Petrarch and Petrarchism in Torquato Tasso's Lyric Poetry," *The Modern Language Review*, 62:2 (1967), 260-261.
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- 63 Panizza, "Introduction to the Translation," in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, xli.
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- 65 Stampino, "A Singular Venetian Epic Poem," in *Enrico*, 2.
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- 68 Anne MacNeil, "The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini," *Journal of the Royal Music Association*, 120 (1995), 207.
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- 77 Torquato Tasso, *Aminta*, trans. by Malcolm Hayward (N.p.: Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1997), accessed April 8, 2012, <http://www.english.iup.edu/mhayward/aminta.htm>, n.p., Act III, scene i, lines 1260-1262.
- 78 Ibid., Act V, scene i, lines 2149-2164.
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- 80 Ibid., Act III, scene i, lines 1367-1368.
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- 82 Ibid., line 1254.
- 83 Andreini, *La Mirtilla*, 44-46, Act III, scene ii, line 1332.
- 84 Ibid., lines 1399-1401.

- 85 Ibid., lines 1487-1491.
- 86 Ibid., lines 1321-1322.
- 87 Hayward, "Introduction," in *Aminta*.
- 88 Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 7.
- 89 Maggie Günsberg, *Gender and the Italian Stage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41.
- 90 Andreini, *La Mirtilla*, 48, Act III, scene ii, lines 1455-1459.
- 91 Tasso, *Aminta*, Act I, scene ii, lines 1644-1647.
- 92 Ibid., Act IV, scene ii, lines 1857-1858.
- 93 Andreini, *La Mirtilla*, 41, Act III, scene i, line 1215.
- 94 Ibid., 44-45, Act III, scene ii, lines 1340-1342.
- 95 Ibid., 87-88, Act V, scene iii, 2754-2755.
- 96 Ibid., lines 2783-2785.
- 97 Andreini, *La Mirtilla*, 91, Act V, scene v, lines 2903-2904.
- 98 Ibid., lines 2909-2911.
- 99 Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 29.
- 100 Andreini, *La Mirtilla*, 12, Act I, scene i, lines 236-237.
- 101 Ibid., 72, Act IV, scene ii, lines 2223-2224.
- 102 Ibid., 65, Act V, scene i, lines 1985-1989.
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- 104 Andreini, *La Mirtilla*, 72, Act IV, scene ii, lines 2216-2217.
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- 106 Ibid., 59, Act III, scene v, lines 1806-1812.
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